

Message Text

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO USNMR SHAPE PRIORITY

CINCEUR VAIHINGEN PRIORITY

CINCUSAFE RAMSTEIN PRIORITY

S E C R E T STATE 053368

EXDIS MILITARY ADDEES TREAT AS SPECAT EXCLUSIVE

FOLLOWING REPEAT BONN 4324 ACTION SECSTATE INFO NATO MAR 10,
1977

QTE S E C R E T BONN 04324

EXDIS

DEPARTMENT PLEASE PASS ACTION TO SECDEF AND INFO TO
USNMR SHAPE, CINC EUR VAIHINGEN AND CINC USAF RAMSTEIN.

SECDEF FOR SECRETARY BROWN

MILITARY ADDEES TREAT AS SPECAT EXCLUSIVE

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MPOL, NATO, AWACS, MILI, GW

SUBJECT: THE ATMOSPHERE IN BONN AS MINISTER OF DEFENSE

LEBER DEPARTS FOR WASHINGTON

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REF: BONN 03618 DTG 281845Z FEB 77 (NOTAL)

BEGIN SUMMARY: THE CURRENT ATMOSPHERE IN BONN ON
POLITICAL-MILITARY MATTERS, AS MINISTER OF DEFENSE LEBER
PREPARES TO DEPART FOR HIS MARCH 15 MEETING WITH
SECRETARY OF DEFENSE BROWN, IS HEAVY. THE USG-FRG
RELATIONSHIP HAS BEEN BEDEVILED BY SERIOUS DIFFERENCES

OF OPINION ON TWO MAJOR POLITICAL-MILITARY ISSUES:
NATO AWACS AND THE TANK PROBLEM. WHILE LEBER'S VISIT
MAY NOT RESOLVE THESE LATTER TWO ISSUES, WE WOULD HOPE IT
CAN AT LEAST DISPERSE SOME OF THE CURRENT ACRIMONY AND
ALLOW CONSIDERATION OF THOSE PROBLEMS IN THE NORMAL USG/
FRG COOPERATIVE SPIRIT. END SUMMARY.

1. OFFICERS CURRENTLY DEALING WITH POLITICAL-MILITARY
AFFAIRS IN EMBASSY BONN HAVE DIFFICULTY IN RECALLING A
TIME WHEN THE ATMOSPHERE IN THE DEFENSE MINISTRY AND
THOSE SECTIONS OF THE FOREIGN OFFICE DEALING WITH
DEFENSE MATTERS WAS SO POOR. MOREOVER, PRESS TREATMENT
OF DEFENSE ISSUES REFLECTS THIS DISCONTENT. ONE
ASPECT OF THE PROBLEM LIES IN GERMAN RESENTMENT OVER
WHAT THEY CONSIDER TO BE THE U.S. "HARD SELL" FOR A
NATO AWACS. THE MORE IMPORTANT ELEMENT, HOWEVER, IS THE
SMOLDERING RESENTMENT OVER THE XM-1/LEOPARD II
TANK COMPETITION. U.S. NEWSPAPER REPORTS SUCH AS THE
HEADLINE IN THE MARCH 9 "STARS AND STRIPES" -- "GERMAN
TANK RATED LOW BY U.S. ARMY EXPERTS HAVE CAUSED THIS
RESENTMENT TO BURN BRIGHTER.

2. ALL MAJOR NEWSPAPERS IN THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC CARRIED
THE AP STORY ON WHICH THE "STARS AND STRIPES" STORY WAS
BASED IN THEIR MARCH 9 EDITION ALONG WITH A FEDERAL
MINISTRY OF DEFENSE DENIAL THAT THE COMPARISON BETWEEN
THE XM-1 AND THE LEOPARD II HAD SHOWN THE GERMAN TANK
TO BE INFERIOR. THE DEFENSE MINISTRY'S DENIAL WAS LOW
KEY, POINTING OUT THAT THE U.S. AND THE FRG BUILT TANKS
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TO MEET DIFFERING MILITARY CONCEPTS AND REQUIREMENTS
WHICH MUST AFFECT ATTEMPTS AT COMPARISON.

3. WHILE THE DEFENSE MINISTRY'S ANNOUNCEMENT DID NOT
INDULGE IN POLEMICS, DEFENSE MINISTRY AND FOREIGN OFFICE
OFFICIALS REACTED BADLY TO THE WASHINGTON STORY. THEY
OBVIOUSLY FEEL THAT IT WAS A DELIBERATE LEAK ON THE PART
OF THE U.S. ARMY AND RESENT IT ACCORDINGLY. IN FRANCE,
FOREIGNERS DON'T DENIGRATE FRENCH COOKING; IN BRITAIN,
FOREIGNERS DON'T CAST ASPERSIONS ON THE QUEEN'S VIRTUE;
AND IN GERMANY, FOREIGNERS DON'T DECRY GERMAN TANK
PROWESS.

4. EVEN BEFORE THE APPEARANCE OF THE STORY
IN THE AMERICAN PRESS, THE GERMAN NEWS MEDIA HAD KEPT UP
A STEADY STREAM OF ARTICLES ALLEGING THE U.S. WAS
UNWILLING TO PURCHASE A
"SUPERIOR" GERMAN TANK JUST BECAUSE IT WAS GERMAN. THIS
FEELING WAS SHARED EVEN BY KNOWLEDGEABLE GOVERNMENT

OFFICIALS. IT IS UNUSUAL FOR GERMAN OFFICIALS VERBALLY TO ATTACK AMERICAN DIPLOMATS FOR U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY BUT RECENTLY IT HAS BEEN ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE TO ENTER INTO A DISCUSSION OF DEFENSE ISSUES WITHOUT REFERENCE BEING MADE TO THE USG'S "RENEGING" ON ITS AGREEMENT TO EQUIP THE XM-1 TANK WITH THE GERMAN 120MM SMOOTH BORE CANNON.

5. THE GERMAN MEDIA ACCOUNTS HAVE BEEN REPEATING MANY OF THE POINTS MADE BY CDU DEFENSE SPOKESMAN WOERNER (REFTEL). AS IN THE CASE OF THE WOERNER STATEMENT, THESE ARTICLES OFTEN EXPRESSED THE VIEW THAT THE FRG SHOULD REFUSE TO PARTICIPATE IN A NATO AWACS PROGRAM AS LONG AS THE U.S. REFUSES TO MAKE NATO STANDARDIZATION A "TWO-WAY STREET." PRESS TREATMENT OF AWACS HAS BY NO MEANS BEEN LIMITED TO THE ALLEGED RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THAT WEAPONS SYSTEM AND THE TANK ISSUE. INSTEAD, A SERIES OF ARTICLES HAS APPEARED EXPRESSING DOUBTS THAT A NATO
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AWACS WOULD BE WORTH THE MONEY IT WOULD COST.

6. A TYPICAL EXAMPLE OF THIS WAS A SERIES OF ARTICLES WRITTEN BY CHRISTIAN POYTKA AND APPEARING IN THE "SUEDDEUTSCHE ZEITUNG" (INDEPENDENT LIBERAL). MR. POYTKA CLAIMED TO BE QUOTING FROM A NATO AWACS STUDY PREPARED BY THE OFFICE OF FMOD STATE SECRETARY SCHNELL WHICH ALLEGED THAT PARTICIPATION IN AWACS WOULD COST MORE THAN THE PURCHASE OF 1,000 LEOPARD II TANKS OR MORE THAN 100 MRCA AIRCRAFT. POYTKA WENT ON TO CLAIM THAT "HARDLY ANY MILITARY OFFICIAL IS PREPARED TO ASSUME RESPONSIBILITY FOR SUCH A LOSS OF TANKS OR AIRCRAFT."

7. THIS DENIGRATION OF AWACS HAS ALL THE EARMARKS OF STEMMING FROM DELIBERATE LEAKS BY OFFICERS IN THE FMOD WHO ARE OPPOSED TO FRG PARTICIPATION IN THE PROGRAM BECAUSE IT WOULD RESULT IN THE POSTPONEMENT OR ABANDONMENT OF THE PROCUREMENT OF OTHER WEAPONS WHICH THESE INDIVIDUALS FEEL SHOULD HAVE A HIGHER PRIORITY. WE DOUBT IF MINISTER LEBER HIMSELF IS BEHIND THIS CAMPAIGN, SINCE, AS WE HAVE PREVIOUSLY REPORTED, HE IS ONE OF THE FEW PEOPLE IN THE DEFENSE MINISTRY WHO APPEAR TO SUPPORT THE PROGRAM. AT THE SAME TIME, LEBER CANNOT IGNORE OPPOSITION TO AWACS WITHIN THE GERMAN ARMED SERVICES. NOR CAN HE IGNORE AN IMPORTANT OPPOSITION POLITICAL FIGURE LIKE WOERNER. THE FACT THAT THE GERMAN PRESS HAS TAKEN UP THE MATTER IN SUCH TRIDENT FASHION FURTHER COMPLICATES HIS PROBLEM.

8. WE BELIEVE THAT LEBER HIMSELF HAS BEEN OPPOSED TO ANYTHING SO CRASS AS TO MAKE GERMAN PARTICIPATION IN A NATO

AWACS PROGRAM DEPENDENT UPON THE U.S. ACCEPTANCE OF THE
120MM GERMAN SMOOTH BORE CANNON FOR THE XM-1.
HOWEVER, THE POLITICAL PRESSURES ON HIM ARE GROWING,
AND PEOPLE CLOSE TO LEBER TELL US THAT THEY BELIEVE THE
GERMAN PARLIAMENTARY MOOD ON STANDARDIZATION HAS
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WORSENER TO SUCH A POINT THAT LEBER SIMPLY CANNOT UNDER-
TAKE OBLIGATIONS PERCEIVED AS UNILATERAL WITHOUT
INCURRING GRAVE POLITICAL RISKS. NONETHELESS, THE
PEOPLE AROUND LEBER ALSO EXPRESS CONFIDENCE THAT HIS
WASHINGTON VISIT WILL BE A SUCCESS AND THAT PROGRESS
CAN BE MADE ON OUTSTANDING QUESTIONS.
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